FROM THE BOOKSHELF #158 SEPTEMBER 14, 1976
ROGER LYONS

"THE GREAT VICTORIAN COLLECTION" BY BRIAN MOORE

ANNCR: THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES FROM THE BOOKSHELF -- A SERIES IN WHICH WE DISCUSS SOME OF THE MANY BOOKS AMERICANS ARE READING. TODAY, VOA'S BOOK EDITOR, ROGER LYONS, REPORTS ON "THE GREAT VICTORIAN COLLECTION" BY BRIAN MOORE, PUBLISHED BY FARRAR, STRAUSS AND GIROUX. HERE NOW IS _____.

EDITOR: IN "THE GREAT VICTORIAN COLLECTION", BRIAN MOORE USES A DEVICE THAT CAN BEST BE DESCRIBED AS SCIENCE FICTION. WHILE WE MAY OR MAY NOT BELIEVE IN PROPHETIC DREAMS, WE COULD HARDLY BE EXPECTED TO GIVE CREDENCE TO A DREAM THAT COMES TRUE IN THE FORM OF A SQUARE CITY BLOCK OF PRICELESS OBJECTS FOR ALL TO SEE AND EXAMINE. BUT THAT IS WHAT HAPPENS TO ANTHONY MALONEY, A CANADIAN PROFESSOR OF HISTORY VACATIONING AT THE FASHIONABLE PACIFIC COAST RESORT TOWN OF CARMEL, CALIFORNIA. MALONEY GOES TO BED ONE NIGHT AND HAS AN AMAZING DREAM THAT THE PARKING LOT OUTSIDE HIS MOTEL IS FILLED WITH A HUGE AND FANTASTIC COLLECTION OF VICTORIAN OBJECTS -- FURNITURE, CLOTHING, BOOKS, TOYS, MACHINERY, BRIC-A-BRAC -- SOMETHING YOU MIGHT SEE IN A MUSEUM. NEXT MORNING HE GOES TO THE WINDOW AND LOOKS OUT:

VOICE: "THERE BELOW ME, JUST AS IN THE DREAM, WAS THE LARGE OPEN-AIR MARKET AND THE MAZE OF STALLS OCCUPYING THE ENTIRE AREA OF THE PARKING LOT WHICH HAD BEEN EMPTY LAST EVENING. I OPENED THE WINDOW, CLIMBED DOWN ONTO THE MAIN AISLE AND BEGAN TO WALK ALONG THAT AISLE, EXACTLY AS I HAD DONE IN MY

VOICE: (CONT'D) DREAM, COMING TO THE SELF-SAME CRYSTAL FOUNTAIN WHICH I RECOGNIZED NOW AS THE WORK OF F & C OSLER, A MARVEL OF CASTING, CUTTING AND POLISHING OF FAULTLESS BLOCKS OF GLASS, ERECTED ORIGINALLY IN THE TRANSEPT AS THE CENTERPIECE OF THAT GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1851...I WALKED ON. EVERYTHING IN THE STALLS, BOOTHS AND SHOWROOMS WAS VIVID AND REAL."

EDITOR: AT FIRST, MALONEY THINKS IT'S AN HALLUCINATION. BUT NO. IT TURNS OUT THAT EVERYONE ELSE CAN SEE AND TOUCH THE COLLECTION TOO. AND SINCE MALONEY HAD WRITTEN HIS DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ON THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF VICTORIAN ENGLAND, THE WHOLE THING COULDN'T BE MORE APPROPRIATE. SO HE UNHESITATINGLY ACCEPTS HIS FEELING IN THE DREAM THAT THE COLLECTION HAS BEEN PUT IN HIS CHARGE AND BELONGS TO HIM. HE CONSIDERS THAT:

VOICE: "IF THESE ARE REAL PEOPLE AND THEY SEE WHAT I SEE, THEN I AM NOT DREAMING. I HAVE MADE THIS COLLECTION COME TO LIFE. NO ONE HAS EVER DONE ANYTHING REMOTELY LIKE IT BEFORE."

EDITOR: BUT THEN MALONEY'S TROUBLES BEGIN. HE HAS TO HIRE SECURITY GUARDS TO PROTECT THE COLLECTION. HE WILL HAVE TO PAY THE GUARDS AND RENT THE PARKING LOT. HIS GREATEST PROBLEM IS CREDIBILITY. WILL ANYONE BELIEVE HE "DREAMED" SUCH A COLLECTION INTO EXISTENCE? HE NEEDS HELP BADLY AND IT COMES IN THE FORM OF A REPORTER, FRED VATERMAN, A LOCAL NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT, AND HIS GIRL FRIEND, MARYANN. FRED HANDLES THE PUBLICITY AND MARY ANN BECOMES HIS SECRETARY, LATER SWITCHING HER AFFECTIONS TO MALONEY.

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EDITOR: (CON'T) WHEN THE PROFESSOR'S STORY IS MADE PUBLIC, THERE IS, OF COURSE, DISBELIEF AND RIDICULE. MALONEY'S MOTHER CALLS FROM MONTREAL AND TELLS HIM HE HAS BEEN OVERWORKING AND SHOULD COME HOME IMMEDIATELY. HIS UNIVERSITY SUSPENDS HIM FROM HIS TEACHING JOB. TWO INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN VICTORIAN EXPERTS, ALTHOUGH THEY CAN FIND NO FLAW IN THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE MATERIALS, THROW DOUBT ON MALONEY'S CHARACTER AND REPUTATION. A PROMOTER WANTS TO TAKE OVER MANAGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION IN ORDER TO PROFIT FROM IT COMMERCIALLY. MALONEY IS SUBJECTED TO INTENSIVE AND EXHAUSTING INTERVIEWS BY TEAMS OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PSYCHIC INVESTIGATORS. ALL THESE DEMANDS BEGIN TO TAKE THEIR TOLL AND MALONEY TRIES TO EXCAPE. BUT WHEN HE DRIVES OUT OF CARMEL, IT RAINS ON THE COLLECTION AND NOWHERE ELSE. HE COMES BACK AND THAT NIGHT HAS ANOTHER DREAM:

VOICE: "THE NEW DREAM WAS INFINITELY MORE EXHAUSTING THAN HIS FORMER.....DREAM. IN THE EARLIER DREAM, HE HAD MOVED ABOUT THE COLLECTION AT WILL, OFTEN IN A STATE OF WONDER AND DELIGHT....BUT NOW HE WAS SHOWN ONLY AN OVERALL, DISTANT VIEW OF EACH AISLE, THE CAMERA HOLDING ON YET ANOTHER DREARY PASSAGEWAY. AND WHERE, FORMERLY, HE HAD SEEN THE COLLECTION IN ALL ITS WONDERMENT OF SHADES AND COLORS, NOW EACH AISLE APPEARED TO HIM ONLY IN THE FUZZY BLUE-GRAY HUES OF BLACK AND WHITE TELEVISION."

EDITOR: FROM THIS POINT ON, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE HAS BECOME A WORLD-FAMOUS CELEBRITY, EVERYTHING GOES DOWNHILL FOR MALONEY. HIS LOVE AFFAIR WITH MARY ANN FALLS APART AND SHE LEAVES HIM.

EDITOR:
(CON'T) THE PROMOTERS HAVE TAKEN OVER AND BUILT A HUGE SHOPPING MART AND ENTERTAINMENT AREA, ALSO CALLED THE GREAT VICTORIAN COLLECTION, ADMISSION TO WHICH INCLUDES A TOUR OF THE COLLECTION ITSELF. BUT WHILE CROWDS FILL THE NEW AREA WITH ITS SHODDY REPLICAS AND ITS VULGARIZED EXHIBITS, FEWER PEOPLE VISIT THE ORIGINAL COLLECTION. FINALLY, THE COLLECTION ITSELF SEEMS TO DETERIORATE. AND ONE NIGHT PROFESSOR MALONEY PUTS HIMSELF TO SLEEP WITH A COMBINATION OF DRUGS AND LIQUOR AND DOESN'T WAKE UP. MALONEY, AT FIRST SO ENRAPTURED BY HIS "DREAM COME TRUE," IS CARRIED TO HIS DEATH IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DREAM.

IN THE GREAT VICTORIAN COLLECTION, BRIAN MOORE HAS RAISED THE QUESTION: IF THE DREAM OF AN ORDINARY MORTAL SHOULD MATERIALIZE, HOW WOULD HE AND THE WORLD REACT? HIS STORY ILLUSTRATES TRUTHS ABOUT HUMAN NATURE. AND ALTHOUGH READERS MIGHT TAKE ISSUE WITH BRIAN MOORE'S PICTURE OF THE WAY PEOPLE WOULD REACT IF SUCH A THING REALLY HAPPENED, THE AUTHOR HAS GIVEN US A WELL-WRITTEN AND ENTERTAINING NOVEL.

ANNCR: YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO A REPORT ON "THE GREAT VICTORIAN COLLECTION" BY BRIAN MOORE. AND NOW AN INVITATION TO JOIN US NEXT WEEK (AT THE SAME TIME) WHEN THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU ANOTHER DISCUSSION OF ONE OF THE MANY BOOKS AMERICANS ARE CHOOSING FROM THE BOOKSHELF.

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